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Heart to Heart ... with Hardisty

 The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (Stimulus Package) will provide funds for Watershed Operations, the Flood Plain Easement Program, and Rehabilitation projects. After careful consideration of Indiana's watersheds, Indiana NRCS has submitted requests for funding.

 The 2008 Farm Bill activities have begun, and we are making preparations for sign-up. Our district conservationists should be out doing conservation planning now and gearing up for contracts to be signed after mid-April. To assist our field staff, the Leadership Team is preparing several forms of communication for our employees and customers.

During these next few months, the Farm Bill activities take priority. I expect our field staff to keep contracts in line with the lessons learned from the Financial Audit conducted last year.

 I commend our field staff on the great work you have done in promoting the Energy Bundle. It is being used as a national model for Energy Conservation Systems and may be adopted by other states. Great job!

 We have many opportunities ahead as we get into our season of implementing conservation on the ground. The Leadership Team will be doing all we can to support our Indiana NRCS employees with the information and training needed in the weeks and months ahead.



Jane E. Hardisty

*** * * * Employee Spotlight * * * ***

**Ben Ashbaugh,
Albion Tech Team Leader**

Q: Ben, tell us a little about your background. Are you Hoosier born and bred?

A: I was born in Fort Wayne and raised just South of Columbia City on a small swine and grain farm. I grew up in a rural area so you could say that my heart is in the country. My family was involved in farming so naturally I participated in 4-H and FFA and did my share of helping out on the farm. I attended Columbia City High School and moved on to Purdue where I graduated with a BS in Crop and Soil Management.

Q: How did you get started with NRCS, and how long have you worked for the agency?

A: After graduating from Purdue I started working for the Allen County SWCD on a two-year funded LARE grant. I worked on the grant for a year and a half and was then given the opportunity by Kimberly Neumann to work for NRCS as a soil conservation technician. I was thrilled to have a permanent position with NRCS as a technician on the new Tech Team. That was about seven years ago. I moved on to serve as soil conservationist, and in May 2007, I was promoted to the Albion Tech Team leader position.

Q: We hear that you have some musical talent. Would you care to share?

A: I have been a member of a square dance/wedding band for about eight years. We play all types of music including square dance, rock and roll, country and even a few polkas. I play rhythm guitar and sing harmonies.

At Purdue, my roommate was the band leader's son, and we both took up playing the guitar while at school. After we had taken lessons for about six months, his dad let us sit in with the band. You could say it was not pretty, but he let us stay!

Q: Do you have any other hobbies or interests that take up your time outside the office?

A: I enjoy volunteering for my local fire department and have been a member since 1996. We are a rural department and see about 50-60 runs a year. I am blessed to have the opportunity to be a member of the department and have much respect for the other members of the department and their dedication to service.



Since I'm not married with children of my own, I truly enjoy spending time with my niece and nephew who are three and six years old. They are a lot of fun to be around and are always full of energy. I really don't know how my sister and brother-in-law keep up with them!

Q: What are some of your goals for the future?

A: That is a tough one. Well, I would have to say that I have given up on my goal of playing with George Strait at the Grand Old Opry. That would have been fun though! But seriously, I hope to work to maintain my good health and continue to strive to be the best that I can be at work and at home. When my time is short here on earth I hope that I can say that I made the most of what the good Lord gave me, and that I made a positive impact on the people around me.

Hoosier Happenings

KUDOS to...

****Susannah Hinds, Jerry Perkins, Victor Shelton, and Robert Zupancic** for the excellent work you put into the Heart of America Grazing Conference. It proved to be a valuable conference for producers, and NRCS Indiana was well represented by you and the new Indiana grazing display. —Shannon Zezula, State Resource Conservationist

****Mark Eastman** for the tremendous job of arranging tours for the Agronomy 450—Soil Conservation and Water Management students at Purdue University. Thanks to your efforts, the students saw real conservation on the ground. Thank you most of all for presenting a positive image of government employment. You demonstrate the caring and competent professionals that make up our conservation partnership in Indiana. —Gary Steinhart, Professor of Agronomy, Purdue University

EWP Detail in New Orleans

Todd Bisner, civil engineering technician in Rensselaer, has accepted a detail to New Orleans, Louisiana to assist with the Emergency Watershed Protection work during the month of March. Hurricane Gustav and Hurricane Ike caused extensive damage the area, and the needs are many. We wish Todd well on his detail and look forward to hearing from him upon his return.

NRCS Represented at Sustainable Earth Event

Darrell Brown solely took on producers at the 2009 Food, Farm and Energy Gathering on Saturday, February 21. The event was sponsored by Sustainable Earth, Inc. as an educational event for food consumers, small farmers, gardeners, and energy users who want a more sustainable lifestyle. Darrell talked to a great number of folks who visited the NRCS booth, providing them with answers to their questions and handouts on NRCS, conservation planning, EQIP and organic agriculture, and how to apply for programs.

Grazing Conference Draws Record Crowd

The annual Northern Indiana Grazing Conference in Shipshewana surpassed previous records with over 800 people in attendance by lunch time! Despite crowded conditions, the program was well received.

A wide variety of presenters spoke on organic calf raising, dairy production on a rotational grazing farm, marketing goat milk and meat, and managing pastured poultry. Attendance at the evening session, which included a Youth Panel discussion and a presentation on “Sustaining the Family Farm,” also broke all previous records. By the end of the day nearly 1,000 individuals had attended some part of the event. The attendees were comprised of Amish and

English, male and female, farm owners and operators; and they represented eight states and South America.

Two aspects that attributed to the record breaking attendance were the ideal sunny weather and the economic downturn in the area. Massive lay offs in the RV and modular home industry in northern Indiana have prompted many people to look at alternatives to factory income, including income from their small farms.



Throughout the day participants spent time attending learning sessions, networking with other producers, and interacting with presenters. They were also able to visit with 50 vendors who provided the newest grazing and farming innovations and products at the conference commercial exhibition. A highlight of the day was the delicious lunch provided by the Brookside Amish School.

This annual conference is planned and carried out by a local committee of graziers from LaGrange, Elkhart, Steuben, Marshall, and Noble counties, in cooperation with the LaGrange County SWCD, NRCS, and Purdue University's Cooperative Extension Service. The program is also supported by local, regional, national and international agriculturally-related businesses.

Where, Oh Where, is Roger Roeske?

Last year Roger Roeske retired from NRCS as an area engineer after working for the agency for 31 years. While serving the agency, he also donated time to help several SWCDs with field days and training events. Since retirement, Roger has devoted much of his time as an Earth Team Volunteer, averaging 20 hours per week. His engineering knowledge has proved valuable to the Districts that are short-handed on technical help and funds. He has even volunteered time in the office by assembling files and folding brochures for various District programs. Currently, Roger is helping Cass, Miami, and Carroll counties with engineering and field checks.

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—Special Emphasis— February—Black History Month

February is designated as National Black History Month, and the 2009 theme is “The Quest for Black Citizenship in the Americas.”

Two generations after emancipation, Blacks in America were still denied the promise of first-class citizenship. In the South, Blacks had been stripped of the right to vote and lived in a society based on racial segregation. In the North, they confronted myriad forms of discrimination that thwarted their aspirations, and the Supreme Court overlooked the denigration of American citizenship taking place.

The struggle to create and maintain equal citizenship for all Americans is the story of the people and organizations whose tireless efforts in exposing the challenging times, keeping the issue of equality before the courts, and organizing throughout the country, inspired national change. This year's theme provides an opportunity to explore race and citizenship in American history from the experiences of free Blacks in a land of slavery, to the political aspirations of African Americans today.

NRCS Visual Information Specialist Devie Perry of Fort Worth, Texas, is this year's Black History Month Poster contest winner.

Congratulations, Devie!



Contact: Bennie Clark, Jr., Black Emphasis Program Manager at bennie.clark@in.usda.gov

Hoosier Happenings (cont.)

Roger also keeps busy caring for his 95 year old father-in-law, gardening and yard work, and creating homemade crafts—which he calls “unique gifts for people who deserve it.” His contagious sense of humor hasn’t changed!



NEW NRCS Indiana Publications on Web

NRCS in Indiana is developing new publications for field use. Currently, three of these new publications have been completed and posted to the Indiana NRCS Web site. From the homepage, go to Info for Indiana NRCS Employees at <http://www.in.nrcs.usda.gov/intranet/index.html> and click on the Publications (Indiana) link. The new publications include:

- 2008 Farm Bill—EQIP and Organic Agriculture
- 2008 Farm Bill—How to Apply for Programs
- So You Inherited the Farm...Now What?

New Farm Bill Display Available

A new 2008 Farm Bill tabletop display is now available for use. Eight copies of the display are located at the Tech Team offices. An additional display, located at the state office, can be requested through the Public Affairs staff.

PARTNERSHIP LINKS

Indiana Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts, *Weekly Updates*:
<http://www.iaswcd.org/whatsnew/index.html>

ISDA, Division of Soil Conservation
<http://www.in.gov/isda/soil/>

Purdue University - www.purdue.edu

Indiana Conservation Partnership - www.iaswcd.org/icp/index.html

IASWCD Annual Conference

The Power of Conservation: Are You Connected?

Approximately 500 conservationists from across Indiana got connected at the 65th Annual Conference of Indiana Soil and Water Conservation Districts...men and women who are helping Indiana residents to conserve land, water, forests, wildlife and related natural resources that encompass Indiana's 23 million acres. Indiana Conservation Partnership leaders conducted a Town Hall Forum at the first General Session to provide information and answers to questions about current conservation issues.

(Pictured at right: NRCS State Conservationist Jane Hardisty addresses the General Session.)



Featured Web Site—Renewable Energy

<http://www.extension.purdue.edu/renewable-energy/>



Purdue University Extension has powered up a Web site on cleaner, greener energy. The Renewable Energy site offers an array of resources on environmentally friendly energy sources and conservation. Visitors will find information on wind and solar energy, biofuels, corn ethanol co-products, on-farm energy efficiency systems, and more!

Mark Your Calendar

February

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|-------------|--|
| 02/22-27/09 | National Invasive Weeds Awareness Week, Washington, DC |
| 02/26/09 | 16th Annual No-Till Breakfast, Hopewell Baptist Church, Holton. Contact Ripley County SWCD |
| 02/28/09 | Indiana Sheep Symposium, Hamilton County Fairgrounds, Noblesville |

March

03/04-05/09	Water Quality Credit Trading Workshop, Easton, MD. Visit CTIC at ctic@conservationinformation.org for information.
03/11/09	SE Area Meeting, North Vernon
03/17/09	Ag Day at the State House, Indianapolis
03/18/09	Farm Bill Training, Rochester
03/19/09	Civil Rights Committee Meeting, State Office, Indianapolis
03/20/09	Farm Bill Training, Spring Mill Park, Bedford
03/24/09	EWP Debriefing Meeting, State Office, Indianapolis
03/25/09	SW Area Meeting, Vincennes
03/31/09	NW Area Meeting, Lafayette

April

04/07/09	NE Area Meeting, Columbia City
04/08/09	SE Area Meeting, North Vernon
04/22/09	EARTH DAY
04/26-05/03/09	2009 NACD Stewardship Week, “Dig It! The Secrets of Soil”
04/28/09	NW Area Meeting, Lafayette
04/29/09	SW Area Meeting, Vincennes

Note: For a listing of Natural Resources Education Center workshops, go to www.in.gov/dnr/nrec

Helping People Help the Land